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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENTS CENTER

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4 August 1981
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THE GAMBIA: SITUATION REPORT

Security in Banjul remains precarious. Some 1,400 Senegalese troops still control key areas in and around the capital--including the US Embassy in the central city--but a major pocket of rebel resistance continues to hold out at the paramilitary police barracks in Bakau, a suburb about 7 miles to the west. The unprotected American Residence--where about 115 US and other personnel have taken refuge--is less than 2 miles from the rebel enclave. An attempt by Senegalese or other military forces to reach the Residence might well be resisted by the rebels. ☐

STAT

No reliable information is available on the strength of the rebel forces. Estimates of the size of the paramilitary police before the coup ranged from 500 to 900. Probably about half this force supported dissident leftist Kukli Sanyang's attempt to topple President Jawara. ☐

STAT

There has been little organized rebel activity since Senegalese infantry and armored units entered Banjul on Sunday. The most serious threat now to US and other foreign personnel in the Banjul-Bakau area is posed by disorganized bands of disgruntled youths, criminals freed by the rebels, and other civilian malcontents sympathetic to the rebels. ☐

STAT

Many of these people are armed with AK-47 assault rifles. Rebel leaders indiscriminately distributed some 2,000 of the weapons from the police armory to civilians shortly after the rebellion began on 30 July. These civilians have committed no acts of violence against US personnel thus far, but they could do so virtually at will and might even try to take American hostages. ☐

STAT

Senegal's well-armed, French-trained troops almost certainly could defeat the organized rebellion and disarm civilian dissidents and criminals if Dakar canceled earlier instructions that field commanders minimize Gambian casualties and ordered them to launch mop-up operations. Senegal, however, has ordered its troops to hold their positions for now while the Gambian Government tries to negotiate an end to the rebellion. Although Jawara has returned to Banjul and the rebels have failed in their attempt to topple his government, they may be able to hold out for some time. ☐

STAT